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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001666

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/PDA (JGREENBLATT); WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON DRUG TRAFFICKING, JULY 12, 2003

1. Op-ed by Guillermo Castellanos Enamorado on Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Heraldo" on 7/12 entitled "Narco trafficking and Congressmen". "The cases of the member of the Central American Parliament detained in Nicaragua and the Honduran Congressman arrested in Olancho have brought forward once again the declarations made by the US Ambassador Larry Palmer, who stated that he hasn't seen any 'powerful figure' being prosecuted for any crime and that it is the duty of the proper authorities to investigate the authenticity of any report on drug trafficking".

"Among the 'powerful' Mr. Palmer refers to, besides Congressmen, we can find ministers, high-ranking public officials, executive directors of decentralized institutions and other big fish that I have no idea of who can also be drug carriers for narco traffickers."

"How is it possible that such people can become members of National Congress or of that white elephant called the Central American Parliament? Even though we already knew that this institution has become the safe haven for the debris of the Central American political elites".

"Anyway, I still wonder, how do these people sneak in? Is it possible that the political parties don't check and re-check the kind of people they include in their electoral ballots?"

"For these and many more other reasons, it is urgent to approve the political reforms promised by the political parties during the last electoral campaign, to create effective mechanisms to avoid these scandals in the future."

Palmer